Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Ethically Managing Social Needs Data in an Era of Enhanced Electronic Health Information Sharing

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An increasing number of pediatric health systems are implementing social needs screening and referral programs. These programs aim to engage families during health care encounters; identify health-related social needs such as food insecurity, housing instability, and difficulty paying for utilities; and then connect families with available resources, often through referrals to community-based organizations and government benefit programs. Because up to 80% of population health is determined by factors outside of medical care, including health-related behaviors and socioeconomic factors, better integration of social care into health care encounters has the potential to both improve population health and address health disparities.

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